

Foreign Area Officer Community Overview Paper

AC FAO Today

FAOs are strategic enablers to the warfighter. English is the most important language that FAOs speak which enables them to interpret and explain the local environment to both US Government and Foreign Governments. From Lieutenant to Rear Admiral, FAOs provide a unique combination of operational experience, cultural knowledge, and language expertise to Fleet and Joint commands. Directly supporting the national and maritime strategies through our three lines of work (Attaché, Security Assistance, and Pol-Mil experts on Major Staffs) FAOs are force multipliers, forging critical global relationships through persistent and credible presence in over 70 countries. FAOs support the warfighter. The 405 billets that have been designated to become FAO billets were previously existing USN billets, but have been designated to be manned in the future by FAOs. OPNAV N52 is the AC and RC FAO Community Sponsor and the Director for International Engagement on the CNO's Staff. The contribution that FAOs can make continues in strategic documents. In Accordance with A design for maintaining Maritime Superiority, FAOs "Deepen operational relationships with other services, agencies, industry, allies and partners – who operate with the Navy to support our shared interests." FAOs "prioritize key international partnerships through information sharing, interoperability initiatives, and combined operations; explore new opportunities for combined forward operations." FAOs support Navy's strategic interests adding value to the Navy's mission through enhanced access, influence and capacity building. FAOs are opening the door from the inside and preparing the battlespace to prevent conflict when possible and when not making the US forces most effective (for example by negotiating overflight clearance and landing permissions).

AC FAO Initial Establishment

The Foreign Area Officer (FAO), designator 1710, Community was announced on 16 September 2005 by NAVADMIN (234/05). The message announced the first FAO Selection Board (to have end strength of approx. 500 officers in 15 years). 14 Nov 2005 was the first applicant deadline for the first board. In December 2005 was the first Lateral Transfer Board for FAOs, unlike today, FAOs were not part of the Navy-wide November 2005 Transfer and Redesignation Selection Board which had the results published on 221443Z December 2005 with NAVADMIN 304/05). 1710 billets were assigned to other designators prior to the stand-up of the FAO Community and were in many cases requested by the customers to be changed to 1710 from URL.

The First Five Years of the AC FAO Community

05 Sept 2006 is the recognized Navy FAO Community birthday thanks to the SECNAV signed document that established the FAO Community on that date. On 04 May 2006, OPNAVINST 1301.10B was signed. Beginning in July 2006 and every six months after between 5 and 31 FAOs were selected on the subsequent biannual lateral transfer boards. In 2007, 241 FAO Billets were identified. FAOs support the warfighter as stated in A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower, "routine and constructive engagement with allies and partners...that brings together the contributions of like-minded nations and organizations around the world to address mutual maritime security challenges and respond to natural disasters." The same document shows places importance on the FAO Community's contribution to the overall Navy mission, "expand and empower the FAO Community to ensure they remain ready to build and strengthen international partnerships and serve as key enablers for joint, maritime, and coalition operations."

The Next Five Years of the AC FAO Community

The FAO community inaugurated the Commander Milestone Screening Process in 2011 and implemented the Major (O-6) Milestone Screen in November 2014. An integral part of the FAO Career Path, Milestone selection is used as an additional quality cut for placement of officers into high-profile/critical fill Major Staff (i.e., DoD, Navy, and Interagency), Security Cooperation, and Attaché positions, as well as critical community (FAO Policy, Officer Community Manager, and Detailer) billets. With the January 2014 approval of the FAO Full Operational Capability (FOC) Plan, the Navy's FAO inventory has grown to over 300 and will reach its FOC end-strength of approximately 400 officers by Fiscal Year 2019. In fall 2015, the methodology for Milestone Screening Timing and the Milestone Billet list were published.

The Fully Qualified AC FAO

A fully qualified FAO must have the following:

- (a) A regionally focused Master's degree. This qualification may be waived by ASN (M&RA) for those with Master's degrees in other areas of study and/or and who have *significant* overseas experience working in-country

with a host nation's government and military. To date, for this waiver to be endorsed, the FAO community standard has been multiple tours overseas with JPME I completion or underway, or a master's degree other than a regionally focused International Relations or Strategic Studies course of study and a compelling timing need for the FAO to become a fully qualified FAO (timing doesn't allow for the FAO to attend a Master's program).

(b) Foreign language qualification via the Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT) and Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) goal of 3/3/3. In order to be designated fully qualified, a FAO must attain a score of at least 2 in at least two of the three modalities (i.e. listening, reading, and speaking) in a foreign language of their assigned region. Even though foreign language proficiency is important, the most important language that a FAO will use in supporting the warfighter is English. FAOs should strive to master not only a foreign language but English as well.

(c) Ideally one year (but at least six months) experience in his or her assigned region.

AC FAO Regional Assignments and Work

FAOs are organized into five geographic regions that correspond to the current Geographic Combatant Command (CENTCOM, PACOM, SOUTHCOM, EUCOM, and AFRICOM) Areas of Responsibility (AOR). FAOs are assigned to an AOR after their lateral transfer application has been selected. Although personal abilities and desires are taken into consideration, the needs of the Navy and the FAO Community drive AOR assignments.

FAOs must be prepared to go to hard jobs, many times back-to-back assignments in region, where the community and the Navy requirements are. Approximately 70% of the time as a FAO will be served in-region. The typical "in-region" jobs are in Security Assistance and in the Defense Attaché Service. When not in-region, FAOs serve on staff assignments with Geographic Combatant Commands, Navy Component Commands, OPNAV, Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, and Department of State as well as in other interagency appointments.

RC FAO Initial Establishment

On 30 June 2015, VCNO authorized the establishment of the RC FAO Community with the transition of 50 billets from other communities. The Reserve Component Foreign Area Officer (RC FAO), designator 1715, Community was announced on 13 August 2015 by CNO Message DTG 131210Z AUG15 (NAVADMIN 188/15). OPNAV N52 is both the Active Component (AC) Community Sponsor and the RC FAO Community Sponsor. RC FAO Community Officer Programmed Authorization was established at 53. The first RC FAO Captain re-designated to 1715 in January 2016 and the first re-designation board convened in February 2016. The board selected 22 Officers to transition into the RC FAO Community. There is also a RC FAO Community Lead (senior RC FAO). The second and final RC FAO re-designation board is scheduled to convene in February 2017.

Utilization of 1715 Officers

RC FAOs will be assigned to RC Billets that were converted to the RC FAO community. Their priority work is determined by strategy driven demand signals. In FY16, 1715 Officers will conduct their Annual Training (AT) as planned according to already established drill opportunities. The reservists will belong in the future to a relevant NRU in a relevant billet. FY17 drill opportunities will be planned from February 2016 until September 2016 with COCOM OSOs based on what is already approved and authorized for AT drill opportunities.

FY18 drill opportunities will be planned from February 2016 into the future and funds will be requested with COCOM OSOs. After FY18, full RC FAO utilization is planned to occur with the possibility of Active Duty for Special Work (ADSW) to support emergent projects and/or definite recalls.

Method of Assigning Billets for RC FAOs

Officers with ranks of Lieutenant and Lieutenant Commander will apply for billets via the JO Apply process quarterly on line. Officers with ranks of Commander and Captain typically compete for a billet during the annual senior officer APPLY board which is held in August. RC FAO billets will be suppressed during the FY17 APPLY board and billet assignments will be handled outside of the APPLY process with coordination between the RC FAO OCM and Reserve Forces Command N12.